Montana Teachers'
Retirement System

PO Box 200139
Helena, MT 59620-0139

Horizons

Montana Teachers' Retirement System Newsletter

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One must maintain a little bit of summer, even in the middle of winter.

– HENRY DAVID THOREAU

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Update From the 2019 Legislative Session

The 66th Montana Legislature adjourned April 25, 2019, the 87th legislative day. Overall, the session was fairly successful for Montana's public retirement systems with no major changes written into law.

A summary of legislation affecting TRS members and employers is provided below.

HB 204: Generally Revise Teachers' Retirement System Laws Sponsor: Marilyn Ryan (D) HD 99

TRS thanks Representative Ryan for sponsoring this housekeeping bill, which revises definitions and updates certain aspects of current law with more concise language. The bill does not reduce members' rights in any way; it merely clarifies TRS policy in several important areas such as designation of and payment to beneficiaries.

SB 139: Revise Retiree Return-to-Work Provisions Sponsor: Mike Lang (R) SD 17

This bill expands the pool of TRS retirees who would qualify, under provisions of §19-20-732, MCA, for reemployment in a position reportable to the retirement system without loss or interruption of their retirement benefits. While TRS does not believe expansion of the existing provision is an effective way to address teacher shortages, lawmakers did agree to implement certain restrictions, verification requirements and a sunset date to minimize potential harm to the retirement system.

HJ 39: Joint Resolution Requesting Legislative Performance Audit on Combining Administration of TRS and MPERA Sponsor: Tom Burnett (R) HD 67

This joint resolution asks the Legislative Audit Division (LAD) to prioritize a performance audit of the administrative operations and costs of MPERA and TRS. This does not obligate the LAD to conduct such an audit, but if one is performed during the interim the LAD will present its findings to the 67th Legislature as to whether any savings could be realized by combining the administrative functions of Montana's public pensions.

To read the full text of any bill, visit leg.mt.gov *and select "Find a Bill."*

What Our Members Are Saying

We understand the decision to retire can be overwhelming. If you are contemplating retirement, you probably have questions about the process. Our team is here to help!

Last year, we received a wonderful message from a member about her experience. We thank Mrs. Potter for allowing us to share that message and we wish her a happy and fulfilling retirement.

Do you have comments or suggestions for TRS? Are you interested in sharing your own retirement story? We'd love to hear from you!

In January of 2018, I decided to retire – Yikes! It meant I'd be relying on other people to provide my financial security. Putting my trust in another agency was extremely scary.

When I called Montana TRS, I was greeted by a warm and understanding voice. A benefit officer walked me through the whole process, and by the end of the conversation I was not only excited about retiring but felt totally at ease with my decision.

When the time is right for you to retire, go for it! Trust me, TRS has your best interests in mind.

Mrs. Teri Potter
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

TRS EXECUTIVE STAFF

Executive Director
Shawn Graham

Deputy Executive Director
Tammy Rau

Chief Legal Counsel
Denise Pizzini

Communication Specialist
Darla Fitzpatrick

Executive Secretary
(To be announced)

ACCOUNTING STAFF

Fiscal Manager
Nolan Brilz

Staff
Joyce Love

Christian Ward

TRS is on the Move!

Announcing our new offices in downtown Helena

Effective July 29, 2019, TRS offices will be located on the first floor of the office building at 100 N. Park Avenue in Helena, near the City-County Building and historic Last Chance Gulch.

TRS has occupied its existing building near the Capitol for nearly 50 years and has simply outgrown that space. The larger space downtown will accommodate the needs of our staff and our members well into the future, with better visitor parking near the entrance and fully ADA-compliant facilities.

Please note that our telephone numbers and mailing address will not change (see Page 4). For the latest updates and directions to our new office, visit our website: *trs.mt.gov*.

View of main entrance on Benton Ave (west) side of building

In Other News...

The upcoming move is just one exciting change for TRS!

Have you noticed our sharp, new logo? The design is similar to the previous version but lends a cleaner look for use in print and digital applications. New logos gradually will replace the older versions on TRS forms and other materials.

You might have wondered why TRS did not distribute a Horizons newsletter in 2018. The primary reason was that our team was focused on several projects to enhance the service we provide to you, our members. For example:

- We modified "**My TRS,**" the online member portal, to allow active members to designate beneficiaries online. See "Keep Your Beneficiaries Up to Date" (Page 4).
- We developed a new presentation, called *TRS 101*, to provide a general overview of the retirement system for newer members or for anyone who wants to learn about TRS.
- We posted video recordings of the *TRS 101* presentation and the latest *Ready-Set-Retire* presentation on our YouTube channel. You can find links to the videos on our website: *trs.mt.gov/TrsInfo/Workshops*
- We also built a webpage for school board members to help them understand the value of TRS in their schools and communities: *trs.mt.gov/TrsInfo/schoolboards*

More new projects are under way, and we welcome your ideas and suggestions.

ACTIVE MEMBER STAFF

Johnelle Sedlock

Jessie Hill

Margaux Lilly

Cathy Page

Jessica Stevens

RETIRED PAYROLL STAFF

Natalie Chamberlain

Chris Fish

Sherry Smith

Shannon Buswell

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STAFF

IT Manager
John Noble

Staff
Rex Merrick

Jeanie Schmidt

JoLynn Genzlinger

TRS
Montana Teachers' Retirement System

Mailing Address:
PO Box 200139
Helena, MT 59620-0139

Physical Address:
(as of July 29, 2019):
100 N Park Ave, Ste 110

(406) 444-3134
(866) 600-4045

email:
trsoutreach@mt.gov

trs.mt.gov

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Public member, Helena

UPDATES and REMINDERS

Staff Updates

Here is a summary of TRS staffing changes, promotions and retirements that occurred over the last several months.

Margaux Lilly joined TRS's Active Member team as a Benefit Officer in September 2018. She brings prior work experience in human resources and employee benefits to the team.

Jessica Stevens, previously a member of the TRS Retired Payroll team, accepted a position on the Active Member team as a Benefit Technician. Jessica manages account transfers between TRS and PERS (the Public Employees' Retirement System). She replaced longtime employee **Sandra Donohue**, who retired from TRS in October 2018.

Shannon Buswell was promoted to Retired Payroll Technician in January 2019. She assists TRS retirees with a variety of day-to-day account maintenance tasks.

Kim Lloyd, a longtime member of the TRS Accounting team, retired in May 2019.

Christian Ward, who joined TRS in December 2018 as Executive Secretary, has accepted the Accounting Technician role vacated by Ms. Lloyd. At press time, TRS has begun interviewing candidates to fill the Executive Secretary position.

Keep Your Beneficiaries Up to Date

All TRS members should take time to review their beneficiary designations periodically in **My TRS**. Go to ***trs.mt.gov*** and click "Member Login."

- Active TRS members (i.e., those who have not yet applied for a retirement allowance with TRS) now may update their beneficiaries online via **My TRS!** This new service reduces the amount of time and paperwork required to designate beneficiaries.
- If you are a retired TRS member: We encourage you to read our new Fact Sheet, entitled *Designation of and Payment to Joint Annuitants and Beneficiaries of Retired Members*, to ensure you understand which amounts may remain payable after your death. This document also explains how – and to whom – TRS must issue those payments. Go to *trs.mt.gov* and click the Fact Sheets icon under "Popular Links."

Keep Your Mailing Address Current, Too

If you receive a monthly benefit from TRS, be sure to submit address changes **in writing** to ensure you receive tax forms and other time-sensitive items.

To obtain *Form 116 Change of Mailing Address,* call us toll free at (866) 600-4045 or print it from our website (go to *trs.mt.gov* and use the "Forms" link on the right side of the page).

TIP: If you are a TRS member who does *not* yet receive monthly benefit payments, you can update your own mailing address in **My TRS**. Visit *trs.mt.gov*, then click "Member Login." Or, use *Form 116 Change of Mailing Address,* as described above.